



Sermon Discussion Questions

04-07-2024

Jessica Stafford (LOX); Pastor Brandon Weaver (LW); Pastor Kurtis Alva (WPB); Mitch Nazario (ESP)

Series: Restored

Week 1: Restored from Hopelessness

1. ICE BREAKER: This series is all about restoration. Have you ever restored something? Perhaps a car, a home, a piece of furniture or something else? Describe what the object was like before, and after you finished.
2. Read our Scripture for this week, John 20:1-18:

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and

believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

¹¹Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). ¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Discuss this passage of Scripture. What questions do you have? What are you noticing for the first time? How do you think Mary is feeling at different points throughout the story?

3. We can think of our world as a grand scale, cosmic "before and after" story. God created our world with an original design of goodness and beauty, which we read about in Genesis 1 and 2. Then something happened.

Describe how our world, and God's design for it, became skewed and broken. What is our world like as a result? Read Revelation 21:1-4. What is the "after" that we are promised?

4. The "before and after" framework doesn't just apply to the world, but to our individual lives. In Genesis 1:27, we read about *Imago Dei*, the fact that every human being is created in the image of God.

Read Ps. 139:13-14. What do these verses tell you about the way humankind is created? What is the significance of *Imago Dei* for our lives? Do you feel our world honors people as being created in the image of God? Why or why not?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17, our theme verse for this series: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*.

Restoration, new life, is available to us now through Jesus. Why do you think that Christianity is sometimes just seen as 'fire insurance' or a 'ticket to heaven'? How does faith in Jesus change our life even now, on this side of heaven? What does restoration mean to you?

6. Read Luke 8:1-3. What do these verses tell us about Mary Magdalene?

Describe Mary's "before" and what her life may have been like. What did Jesus restore her *from*? How has God restored you from dark places, or moments of deep pain? Share what God has done in your life.

7. Mary Magdalene is sometimes called the "apostle to the apostles." Throughout Jesus' ministry, He elevated women in a way that was completely countercultural.

Read Luke 8:1-3. Describe the roles of the women that are included in this passage. What implications does this have for women and for the church now?

8. Restoration is not just about what we are restored from, but also what we are restored to. Mary's story teaches us that all of us can be restored to our divine purpose.

Discuss what Mary was restored to. How have you seen God restore you to your divine purpose throughout your walk with Him? Is it easy or hard for you to believe that God has a specific purpose for your life? Why?

9. Mary is recorded by all four gospel writers at the foot of the cross, witnessing the burial of Jesus in the tomb, at the empty tomb before dark, and the first to witness His resurrection.

Why do you think Mary was one of the only ones who stayed with Jesus? What implications does this have for us? What do you think she learned through these experiences?

10. PRACTICE: Spend time as a group asking God two questions: 1) What do you want to restore me from? and 2) What do you want to restore me to?

Share what you feel the Holy Spirit is saying to you.